

VZCZCXRO2618  
OO RUEHROV  
DE RUEHJM #1084 1770939  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 250939Z JUN 08  
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1901  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001084

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KISL](#) [PREL](#) [EG](#) [SA](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)  
SUBJECT: PA GEARING UP FOR ANOTHER BATTLE WITH HAMAS OVER  
HAJJ PILGRIMS

REF: 07 JERUSALEM 2453

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas M. Duffy, for reasons 1.  
4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Deputy Waqf/Religious Affairs Minister Salah Zuhaykah told PolOff June 25 that Hamas is again obstructing PA Waqf Ministry efforts to register Hajj pilgrims in Gaza and transport them to Saudi Arabia via Erez Crossing and Jordan. He said Hamas has announced competing arrangements and is strong-arming Gaza-based banks and courier services to force Gaza's Hajj aspirants to register through Hamas' "Waqf Ministry." Most companies in Gaza have been forced to refund deposits and Saudi visa applications accepted on the PA Waqf Ministry's behalf, Zuhaykah said, due to Hamas pressure. He added that while the PA is looking at options such as internet and telephone registration and payment, "most Gazans, and especially the elderly, are not so sophisticated with technology to be able to take advantage of such services."

12. (C) Zuhaykah said the decisive actions in the PA's battle with Hamas over pilgrim registration are in Saudi and Egyptian hands. He said the PA felt undercut and betrayed by Saudi issuance of Hajj visas in Cairo last year to thousands of Hamas-registered pilgrims, and by Egyptian complicity in opening Rafah Crossing and providing transportation (Reftel). He alleged that GOE and Saudi authorities coordinated their actions with Hamas. He said most of Gaza's pilgrims would register with the PA, not Hamas, given the choice, and said the PA is asking Saudi authorities to only issue Hajj visas to PA-registered pilgrims.

DUFFY